

APRIL 28, 1976

CARTER AND THE DEMOCRATIC ESTABLISHMENT

ANNCR: CHARLES MEDD LOOKS AT THE CONTEST FOR THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION FOLLOWING JIMMY CARTER'S MOST IMPRESSIVE PRIMARY VICTORY.

VOICE: JIMMY CARTER, LIKE THE SONG "OLD MAN RIVER", KEEPS ROLLING ALONG, AND HIS RIVALS ARE RUNNING OUT OF TIME AND WAYS TO STOP WHAT IS FAST BECOMING A FLOOD TIDE. THEY TRIED IN PENNSYLVANIA WITH A COALITION OF PARTY LEADERS AND TRADE UNIONS, BUT FAILED. AND ONE DAY AFTER MISTER CARTER'S MOST IMPORTANT PRIMARY VICTORY, ORTHODOX DEMOCRATS ARE WONDERING WHETHER IT'S ALREADY TOO LATE TO SAVE THE NOMINATION FOR A MORE FAMILIAR PARTY REPRESENTATIVE.

BEFORE THIS YEAR'S CAMPAIGN BEGAN, MOST OF THE POLITICAL EXPERTS HAD AGREED TO THE FOLLOWING SCENARIO: WITH A RECORD NUMBER OF THIRTY STATE PRIMARIES AND ABOUT ONE DOZEN CANDIDATES IN THE RUNNING, NOBODY WOULD REACH THE PARTY CONVENTION WITH ENOUGH SUPPORT TO CLAIM THE NOMINATION. AT A DEADLOCKED CONVENTION, THIS SCRIPT SAID, THE ELECTED OFFICIALS AND OTHERS WHO MAKE UP THE PARTY ESTABLISHMENT WOULD USE THEIR POWER AND WISDOM TO BRING ABOUT A COMPROMISE DECISION.

BUT JIMMY CARTER, THE OUTSIDER FROM GEORGIA, HAS ALL BUT ERASED THAT SCENARIO. IN A SYSTEM OF PRIMARY ELECTIONS DESIGNED TO GIVE RANK-AND-FILE PARTY MEMBERS A DIRECT VOICE IN THE NOMINATING PROCESS, CARTER HAS EMERGED AS THE POPULAR CHOICE. EACH VICTORY HAS GIVEN CARTER WHAT HE NEEDED THE MOST -- MORE PUBLICITY AND MORE MONEY FOR CAMPAIGN EXPENSES -- AND WHAT WINNING OUTSIDERS INVARIABLY GET, MORE CRITICISM FROM WITHIN THE ESTABLISHMENT.

FOR WEEKS HIS CRITICS HAVE BEEN SAYING JIMMY CARTER IS WINNING FOR THE WRONG REASONS-- THAT VOTERS ARE NOT SO MUCH TURNING TO

HIM AS AGAINST THE MORE FAMILIAR FACES IN THE PARTY HIERARCHY, THAT HIS CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN BASED MORE ON PERSONALITY THAN ON ISSUES. BUT A GROWING NUMBER OF OBSERVERS ARE COMPARING THE CARTER CAMPAIGN WITH THAT OF ANOTHER DEMOCRAT, JOHN KENNEDY, HIMSELF AN OUTSIDER IN 1960.

LIKE KENNEDY, CARTER HAS DEMONSTRATED POLITICAL SKILLS VITAL TO CANDIDATES AND PRESIDENTS AS WELL. AND AS FOR THE ISSUES, ON BOTH FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC POLICIES, JIMMY CARTER HAS BEEN -- THESE OBSERVERS SAY -- AS SPECIFIC AS ANY OF HIS RIVALS.

WHETHER HIS RIVALS CAN STOP JIMMY CARTER MAY DEPEND ON WHAT THE PARTY'S MOST DURABLE FIGURE -- SENATOR HUBERT HUMPHREY-- DECIDES TO DO. SENATOR HUMPHREY -- THRICE A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IN THE PAST WHO HAS BEEN WATCHING THIS YEAR'S CONTEST FROM THE SIDELINES-- IS THE CLEAR FAVORITE OF THE DEMOCRATIC ESTABLISHMENT. BUT AN ELEVENTH HOUR EFFORT TO WREST THE NOMINATION FROM THE MAN IN FRONT WOULD NOT ONLY BE DEVISIVE, IT MIGHT BE TOO LATE TO TRY.